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TAGS: PREL PGOV BU TZ
SUBJECT: BURUNDI, FNL SIGN CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Burundi's president, Pierre Nkurunziza, and Palipehutu-FNL's Chairperson, Agathon Rwasa, signed a Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement in Dar es Salaam September 17. The ceasefire is to take effect 72 hours from the signing of the agreement. The agreement outlines further steps to be taken, including the issue of the military returning to barracks, but leaves the implementation of these modalities to annexes still to be negotiated. The agreement's signing ceremony capped the 27th Regional Summit on Burundi which was chaired by Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni and facilitated by South Africa's Minister of Safety and Security, Charles Nqakula. The full text of the agreement is to be available September 8. END SUMMARY

Last-minute negotiations delay ceremony

¶2. (U) The ceasefire signing ceremony, scheduled to begin at 1100 local time, commenced at 1630 local time due to continuing negotiations. At noon local time Poloff asked Aloys Mbonayo, Burundi's Ambassador to Tanzania, if an agreement would be reached today and he replied the outcome of the talks still hung in the balance. He said that there was a tri-partite pre-summit underway involving Burundi, Tanzania and South Africa, which was to be followed by a meeting of all summit attendees. He added that two sets of issues were being discussed: those between the Government of Burundi (GOB) and the FNL, and issues internal to Burundi, such as the recent resignation of Vice President Alice Nzomukunda.

¶3. (U) At 1430 local time invited guests were admitted into the room where the signing ceremony was to take place and officials drifted in and out for about an hour. A stack of papers was brought to the signing table then removed and news circulated that the parties were discussing a single word on which they had not yet agreed. At 1630, all parties involved in the summit entered and the program of events was announced by an official from Tanzania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Players...

¶4. (U) Present at the dais were:

Kenya's Foreign Minister, Raphael Tuju;
Zambia's Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Dr. S.G.
Mwale;
Rwanda's Prime Minister, Bernard Makuzu;

South Africa's President, Thabo Mbeki;
South Africa's Minister of Safety and Security, Charles Nqakula;
Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni;
Tanzania's President, Jakaya Kikwete;
Burundi's President, Pierre Nkurunziza;
Palipehutu-FNL's Chairperson, Agathon Rwasa;
African Union Commission's Deputy Chairperson, Patrick Mazimhaka; and
United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative, Nureldin Satti.

...and what they had to say

15. (U) The ceremony began with a series of brief speeches. President Kikwete noted that the conflict in Burundi created one of the largest number of refugees on the continent and an equal number of internally displaced persons. President Mbeki added that the continent of Africa had felt the pain of suffering which had gone on for too long and said to Nkurunziza and Rwasa "thank you for what you are about to do." Several speakers paid respect to African leaders who had been involved in the Burundi peace process, begun in 1995, specifically Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela and Benjamin Mkapa.

16. (U) As chairperson of the summit, Museveni spoke at several points during the ceremony. In his initial address, he likened the problems of Burundi to those of Rwanda and Uganda, saying all had caste elements and noted that colonialism had "complicated" caste relations, leaving them dangerously antagonistic. Museveni said he was glad that the FNL had now come into the process and that the GOB had been flexible. Museveni emphasized that partnership on three levels--national parties, region and international community--is what can, and ultimately did, bring results. After the signing ceremony and with a tone of fatherly advice, Museveni said: "We must get in the habit of the vote. You vote one out, another one in--it's very simple." In closing the ceremony, he articulated what other speakers had alluded to: hope that this will be the last summit on Burundi.

Burundi leaders from both sides look forward

17. (U) Speaking in French, Burundi's President Nkurunziza thanked Burundi's African partners and said the agreement opened a new world for his country and will permit the people of Burundi to live together. Nkurunziza said the agreement signals the FNL's nobility and determination, referred to the FNL as "chers compatriots" and said now Burundi's problems are "our problems." Chairperson Rwasa said the agreement demanded a lot of energy and sacrifice and cautioned that this was only the beginning. Rwasa said such an agreement could have been signed 25 years ago if the Burundi people had had a drive for peace and a national pacifist spirit. Noting that Burundi has a lot to learn about democracy, several times Rwasa asked for the international community to continue to contribute and assist Burundi, and not to hesitate to give advice so that the Burundi people can advance in democracy and in human rights.

Press Statement

18. (U) A press release left at the signing ceremony states that the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement seeks to:

- (a) Guarantee cessation of all hostilities, armed or otherwise, including malicious public statements from both sides within 72 hours following the signing of the agreement;
- (b) Unveil a program for the repatriation of the FNL leadership in the Great Lakes region and in the Diaspora including their protection while in transit and static protection in Burundi; and
- (c) Disarm FNL combatants and transport them to U.N.-supervised cantonment areas.

COMMENTS: Mood and VP vacancy

¶9. (SBU) Nkurunziza and Rwasa exhibited a stoic resolve during the two-hour ceremony, looking straight ahead or gazing down with arms crossed and barely looking at each other. The mood of the summit's opoQacc{vkQcl?efQ-vQ